

We claim:

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1.

A shroud for a digging machine having at least a frame and a rotating ground engagement feature, comprising:

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a flexible panel having first and second end portions and opposite side portions; said first and second end portions being operatively coupled to the frame adjacent the rotating ground engagement feature; said panel having a width extending between said opposite side panels that is at least equal to a greatest width of the ground engagement feature.

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2.

The shroud of claim 1 further comprising a spring operatively coupled to the first end portion of said panel so that said first end portion is biased in a generally upward direction away from the ground engagement feature.

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3.

The shroud of claim 2 further comprising a second spring operatively connected to the second end portion of said panel and the frame so that said second end portion is biased in a generally forward direction.

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4.

The shroud of claim 3 further comprising a mounting bracket operatively connected to the second end portion of said panel and operatively pivotably coupled to the frame.

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5.

The shroud of claim 4 wherein said second spring engages a portion of said mounting bracket.

6.

The shroud of claim 1 wherein the ground engagement feature is capable of projecting ground material in a generally upward and rearward direction; said panel being positioned to deflect a substantial portion of said ground material laterally with respect to the ground engagement feature.

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In combination:

a digging machine having a mobile frame and ground engagement means rotatably coupled to said frame for excavating portions of ground material; and  
a flexible panel having first and second end portions operatively coupled to said frame adjacent said ground engagement means;  
said panel having a width that is at least equal to a greatest width of said ground engagement means.

8.

The combination of claim 7 wherein said ground engagement means is capable of projecting said portions of ground material in generally upward and rearward directions; said panel being positioned with respect to said ground engagement means to deflect a substantial portion of said portions of ground material laterally with respect to said ground engagement means.

9.

1      The combination of claim 7 further comprising a tensioning spring operatively connected to the second end portion of said panel and said frame so that said second end portion is biased in a generally forward direction.

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5      The combination of claim 9 further comprising a mounting bracket operatively connected to the second end portion of said panel and operatively pivotably coupled to said frame.

11.

10     The combination of claim 10 wherein said second spring engages a portion of said mounting bracket.

12.

15     The combination of claim 7 further comprising a biasing spring operatively coupled to the first end portion of said panel and said frame so that the first end portion of said panel is biased in a generally upward direction away from said ground engagement means.

13.

20     The combination of claim 12 further comprising a spring seat coupled to said frame to operatively receive the first end portion of said panel and said biasing spring.

14.

25     The combination of claim 7 further comprising means for generally biasing said panel away from said ground engagement means.